

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Alice P. Albright, of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Executive Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Albright nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Legislative Session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

### TRIBUTE TO SECRETARY OF THE SENATE SONCERIA ANN BERRY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, serving in the U.S. Senate for as long as I have, I have seen dedicated, talented staffers come and go from my team. Some come to my office fresh out of college, spend some time, and move on to other opportunities or to further their education. Some have come to stay for years. And others join my team, already seasoned veterans of the Senate—and leave for higher office.

So is the story of my dear friend, Sonceria Ann Berry, the 34th Secretary of the Senate, and my former deputy chief of staff. It was with great pride when, on March 1, 2021, I administered the oath to Ann as she became our own Madam Secretary. And it should come as no surprise that Ann brought to the esteemed position decades of experience in the Senate. A seasoned professional who has seen changes in leadership through the Congresses, Ann has counseled and mentored, quite literally, hundreds of staffers young and old. Her appointment as the Secretary of Senate was a source of great pride for me, and I am sure the other Members for whom she worked, including Senator CARPER and former Senator John Edwards, as well as the late Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Howell Heflin, share that pride.

Secretary Berry is a 1978 graduate of the University of North Alabama, where she earned her bachelor degree in education. She recently returned to the University of North Alabama to de-

liver the fall commencement address. I found her words inspiring to the new graduates she addressed and instructional for those embarking in post-graduate life.

I would like to ask unanimous consent that Secretary Berry's commencement remarks be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS—SONCERIA ANN BERRY, SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

FALL 2021 COMMENCEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

Thank you for that wonderful introduction, and let me begin by congratulating the Class of 2021 for sticking with it, overcoming unprecedented challenges, and graduating with a well-earned degree in resilience, in addition to what you majored in.

College graduation is always a remarkable achievement, but nobody has ever been through what you've been through to get here, and you can wear this experience and this hard-won success like a badge of honor for the rest of your life.

Congratulations also to your families and friends who have helped you get to this day.

They are heroes, just like you, and they have made their own sacrifices to support your ambitions. And I think they deserve their own round of applause.

I graduated from the University of North Alabama, with a degree in secondary education, in 1978.

As it happened, I didn't spend a minute of my career in secondary education.

Life had other things in store for me, and because of those completely unexpected things, earlier this year, this fine university honored me with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

They said it was because I was the first African American ever to serve as Secretary of the Senate—the chief administrative, legislative and financial officer of the world's greatest deliberative body.

Or they may have just been looking for someone who graduated a really long time ago.

Either way, it was very special to me, because it was this university that set me on a path of life I would never have dreamed of before coming here.

Before UNA, my ambition was to get a good office job.

I was a pretty good typist and I was hoping for a career in an office as a secretary.

I was poor. I wanted to work and make money and have some security for myself and my family.

But after high school, I found work at the Home Insurance Company in Homewood, Alabama.

They call it a "gap year" now when you take a year between high school and college to figure yourself out.

But, for me, it wasn't anything so fancy. It was a year of making a living.

But it was also when I first learned about the University of North Alabama.

And the more I learned about it, the better I knew that it was the place for me.

UNA was not only the State's oldest public university, with a heritage of training some of Alabama's finest teachers.

In an era when it was still quite unusual for women to go to college, UNA had already opened its doors to women for a hundred years.

And this year, UNA proudly celebrates its 150th anniversary of co-education with the Year of the UNA Woman.

I was also impressed by the academic rigor built into the tradition of UNA.

In its days as Florence Wesleyan University, prospective students had to demonstrate an ability to translate four books of Caesar's Gallic Wars from the original Latin, and six books of Virgil from the original Greek, into English.

I think all of us feel fortunate that those particular skills are no longer required for admission to the University of North Alabama.

I know I did, and yet I quickly discovered that this university's academic standards remained commendably high, and so were its standards of conduct and ethics.

It was also a community, where people cared about each other, helped each other, encouraged each other, nurtured each other.

The course of my life was changed in just this way.

After graduation, when I couldn't find work as a teacher, I took a job as a secretary in the engineering department of South Central Bell.

But a year later, in 1979, I was contacted by the office of Alabama's newly-elected United States Senator Howell Heflin about a position in the Senator's Washington office.

I didn't know Senator Heflin, or how his office had found me.

But I learned later that Dr. Robert Guillot, the president of UNA for whom I had served as a student aide in the Admissions Office, had recommended me to the Senator.

And I was off to Washington, DC—a city I had never seen—for what Dr. Guillot correctly called "the opportunity of a lifetime."

That was forty-two years ago, and in the decades since, I have been proud to work not only for Senator Heflin but later for five other United States Senators in positions of increasing responsibility.

I was thinking seriously of retiring earlier this year when I was offered the position of Secretary of the Senate—a position for which I was nominated by the Majority Leader, Chuck Schumer of New York, and to which I was elected by the full membership of the United States Senate.

Today I manage the Senate as an institution, supervising 26 departments, nearly 240 employees and a \$25 million budget.

My team and I are responsible for everything from recording each day's Senate debates to running the Senate gift shop.

The Parliamentarian of the Senate, the Senate Historian, the office of inter-parliamentary services, and the people who pay 100 Senators and thousands of staff people report to me.

And I am proud to be the first African American, and the eighth woman,